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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUSCAT 000858

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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST SPEAKS TO FOREIGN MEDIA,
FEARS FOR SAFETY

REF: A. MUSCAT 207

[B](#). 05 MUSCAT 1132

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

[1](#). (C) Former parliamentarian and human rights activist Taybah al-Ma'wali told foreign media and the Embassy in May that she fears for her safety and alleges that Oman's Internal Security Service (ISS) is collecting evidence to make another case against her. Ironically, at the same time as granting press interviews, al-Ma'wali has approached foreign embassies for assistance in leaving Oman until attention in her case dies down. End Summary.

Activist Fears For Her Safety

[2](#). (SBU) In a May 28 interview with Agence France-Press (AFP), recently released human rights activist Taybah al-Ma'wali (ref A) said that Omani security services continue to monitor her closely and that she is fearful for her safety. A translation of the AFP article was also carried in the London-based Arabic daily Al-Quds al-Arabi. Al-Ma'wali conveyed a similar message to PolOff in an earlier meeting and sought assistance in working or studying abroad.

[3](#). (C) Although not mentioned in the AFP interview, al-Ma'wali told PolOff that her concerns stem from the recent arrest and release of Majlis al-Shura member Abdullah bin Mubarak bin Abdullah al-Balushi. (Note: The Majlis al-Shura is Oman's elected house of parliament. End note.) According to al-Ma'wali, al-Balushi, angry at the government's handling of a bad business deal he had with a company in Mauritania, sent a threatening SMS text message to the Inspector General of the Royal Oman Police, in which al-Balushi warned al-Ma'amari to "have fear from Allah for your sake and the sake of your children... and be aware because your tyranny and position are not permanent. My family will complain about you to Allah late at night so that Allah will give us back our rights." (Note: Sending slanderous or libelous text messages on a mobile phone violates Article 61 of the Telecommunications Regulation Act and can carry a sentence of one year in jail and a Riyal Omani 1000 (\$2600) fine for each charge. End Note.)

[4](#). (C) According to al-Ma'wali, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) Special Forces arrested al-Balushi on February 17 and released him after 11 days of interrogation, which al-Balushi claimed included the use of electric shock. She said that al-Balushi claimed that most of the interrogation focused on how well he knows al-Ma'wali, how often they correspond, and the nature of their relationship. Interrogators allegedly pressed al-Balushi to admit who sent the text message, himself or al-Ma'wali. Although al-Balushi later admitted to al-Ma'wali in private that he sent the message, fearful of the consequences, he told the ROP that anyone in his family with access to his phone could have sent the message.

Gathering Evidence Against Her?

[5](#). (C) Al-Ma'wali told PolOff that she believes the ISS's renewed interest in her implies that the government is gathering information to file new charges. Al-Ma'wali claimed that her home is watched and her email communications intercepted and deleted. Al-Ma'wali said that she is fearful of leaving her home after dark and alleges that an ISS friend told her to "take care...Malik al-Maamari has not forgotten you."

Comment

16. (C) Until her recent AFP interview, al-Ma'wali had not made public statements since her release from prison in February after her case had garnered international attention and became a topic of debate with political figures and in a local internet chatroom. Al-Ma'wali's case was also specifically mentioned in a recent Amnesty International human rights report, perhaps another irritant to the authorities. Al-Ma'wali expressed to PolOff concern for her safety, alleging that "accidents" happen, and sought to leave Oman for at least a year while interest in her story diminishes.

Biographic Update

17. (SBU) Al-Ma'wali told PolOff that her older sister is married to a member of the royal family, Sayyid Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Busaidy. Her sister and al-Busaidy are owners of a successful Omani jewelry shop, Al-Felaij jewelry, and own a residence in central London. Although al-Ma'wali is close to her family, she says that her sister is indifferent to al-Ma'wali's situation and will not provide her refuge in her London home.
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